UNITED NATIONS **S**

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1999/432
16 April 1999
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

LETTER DATED 16 APRIL 1999 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the report on the situation in Guinea-Bissau prepared by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) pursuant to the request made in paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 1216 (1998).

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN

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Annex

Report on the situation in Guinea-Bissau prepared by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

Introduction

1. This is the first report addressed to the United Nations Secretariat by the Executive Secretariat of ECOWAS concerning the situation in Guinea-Bissau. It has been prepared pursuant to Security Council resolution 1216 (1998) of 21 December 1998.

2. The report covers the period from the date of the deployment in Guinea-Bissau of advance contingents of the ECOWAS Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) to the present. It describes the status of implementation of the Abuja Agreement of 1 November 1998, including the activities of ECOMOG in Guinea-Bissau, and the political, military, social and humanitarian situation.

I. Deployment of ECOMOG in Guinea-Bissau

3. To facilitate the implementation of the Abuja Agreement, the current Chairman of ECOWAS and President of the Togolese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Gnassingbé Eyadéma, dispatched a Togolese company of 112 men to Bissau on 26 December 1998, as an advance detachment of the ECOWAS interposition force (ECOMOG). Upon its arrival, this detachment was immediately deployed to two strategic points in the capital city, namely, the port and the airport, and in the Bôr district.

4. In addition, the following member States, in response to the ECOWAS appeal, pledged to supply troops for the ECOMOG force in Guinea-Bissau: Benin (300 men), Gambia (150 men), Niger (500 men) and Togo (500 men). To help those States honour their pledge and to speed up the deployment of additional ECOMOG troops, the French Republic offered to transport to Bissau troops constituting a battalion of 600 men. The French Republic also offered to defray the battalion's subsistence costs (per diem) and to provide it with basic logistical support. With this support, contingents from the countries in question were transported to Bissau from their respective capitals. A meeting of the army chiefs of staff of the countries concerned was held in Lomé on 19 and 20 February 1999 to decide on the size of the different contingents that were to make up the battalion, in order to reflect the international character of the West African interposition force in Guinea-Bissau. Since 12 February 1999, the French-supported battalion has brought to 712 men the current operational strength of ECOMOG in Guinea-Bissau. All these troops are under the command of Colonel Gnakoudé Berena. The ECOMOG command divided the city of Bissau into four sectors, putting one contingent in charge of each sector.

5. Since the ECOMOG mission in Guinea-Bissau required the rapid deployment of a second battalion with a permanent strength of 850 men, ECOWAS undertook to find appropriate assistance for this purpose. In this connection, a meeting of the friends of Guinea-Bissau is to be held in New York, under United Nations auspices, on 20 April 1999, at which donors should indicate what assistance they

intend to provide for the deployment of additional ECOMOG troops in Guinea-Bissau.

II. Implementation of the Abuja Agreement

6. The parties in Guinea-Bissau, encouraged by the twenty-first session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, signed a peace agreement in Abuja on 1 November 1998. In that agreement, they reaffirmed the ceasefire agreement signed in Praia on 26 August 1998. They also agreed on procedures for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Guinea-Bissau, ECOMOG activities in Guinea-Bissau, the establishment of a government of national unity and the holding of general and presidential elections.

A. Monitoring of the ceasefire agreement

7. Unfortunately, there was a resumption of hostilities in Bissau on 31 January 1999, resulting in serious violations of the ceasefire agreement. Heavy fighting took place between the warring parties, which was halted only through the mediation of the current Chairman of ECOWAS, culminating in the signing of a new ceasefire agreement by President João Bernardo Vieira and General Ansumane Mane in Bissau on 3 February 1999. There have been no further serious violations of the ceasefire agreement since then.

B. Withdrawal of foreign troops from Guinea-Bissau

8. The resumption of hostilities, together with the fact that logistical constraints prevented the immediate deployment of all the troops promised by member States willing to supply them to ECOMOG, meant that the withdrawal of foreign troops could not be effected simultaneously with the deployment of ECOMOG. As a result, certain activities, such as the demilitarization of the city of Bissau, the return to barracks of soldiers of the two warring parties, the collection and storage of weapons and the dismantling of checkpoints and of the front line in Bissau, had to be begun before the complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Guinea-Bissau. The withdrawal of foreign troops continued until 22 March 1999.

C. ECOMOG activities in Guinea-Bissau

9. Since the deployment of ECOMOG in Guinea-Bissau, its activities both prior to the resumption of hostilities on 31 January 1999 and after that date have consisted of the following:

- Period prior to 31 January 1999

10. ECOMOG undertook to consolidate the ceasefire by means of patrols and visits to the front line. It carried out awareness-raising activities among soldiers of the two warring parties, thereby helping to build a climate of confidence between them. It also reopened the main roads linking the capital to the country's interior. It set up a joint military commission on which it is represented, comprising members of the loyalist forces and the junta's forces. The joint commission is responsible, inter alia, for settling the various disputes between the parties to the conflict. ECOMOG helped to promote freedom

of movement of persons, including the freedom of movement of soldiers of the two parties by accompanying them outside areas under their control whenever they wished. It helped all those seeking access to displaced persons and refugees to gain such access. Its doctors also provided services in situ to refugees and displaced persons. Lastly, it helped ensure the free movement of goods.

- Period from the resumption of hostilities to the present

11. ECOMOG evacuated officials of embassies and international organizations, and anyone else who wanted to be evacuated, from areas where there was fighting. It took part in the ceasefire negotiations held under the auspices of the current Chairman of ECOWAS. It obtained the consent of the warring parties to the interposition of forces on the front line. It is continuing to contribute to the work of the joint military commission, which has set up a joint unit for the verification, monitoring and collection of weapons. This is a genuine disarmament structure with its own statute and three subcommissions. Between 25 February and 4 March 1999, the joint military commission undertook the recovery of heavy weapons, which posed the biggest threat, throughout the national territory. The recovered weapons were placed in containers locked by three sets of keys, with the junta, loyalist forces and ECOMOG each keeping one set of keys. The containers have been gathered together in specific locations and are being guarded by ECOMOG. The joint military commission's disarmament exercise ended in Bissau on Saturday, 20 March 1999. The commission has also marked mined areas of the capital city, pending their demining. It has marked unexploded devices and is removing them for destruction as soon as they are dug up. Bulletins have been broadcast on national radio and the junta's radio station, alerting the population to the dangers of such devices. It is estimated that, in all, over 20,000 mines were laid in Guinea-Bissau, and that there are over 1,200 unexploded devices (shells, rockets, grenades) buried here and there, including in the gardens of some homes. The joint military commission is also setting up an ad hoc commission for the reunification of combatants of the two warring parties within a genuinely national army.

D. Establishment of a government of national unity

12. Within the framework of the implementation of the Abuja Agreement of 1 November 1998, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. João Bernardo Vieira, at the junta's proposal, appointed Mr. Francisco Fadul as Prime Minister.

13. Within the same framework, the current Chairman of ECOWAS and President of the Togolese Republic, His Excellency Mr. Gnassingbé Eyadéma, invited the signatories to the Abuja Agreement to a meeting to discuss the evolution of the peace process in Guinea-Bissau and to seek ways and means of accelerating the implementation of the Agreement. At that meeting, held in Lomé on 14 and 15 December 1998, the parties, inter alia, agreed on the formation of a government of national unity according to a structure and a distribution of portfolios which were set out in an additional protocol to the Abuja Agreement. The structure and the distribution of ministerial portfolios were as follows:

Ministries to be filled by the President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation;
- Ministry of Justice and Labour;
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Natural Resources;
- Ministry of Education, Youth, Culture and Sports;
- Ministry of Health and Social Affairs;
- Secretariat of State for Energy, Natural Resources and the Environment;
- Secretariat of State for Transport and Communications;
- Secretariat of State for Administrative Reform and the Civil Service.

Ministries to be filled by the Commander of the self-proclaimed military junta:

- Ministry of Defence and National Freedom Fighters;
- Ministry of the Interior;
- Ministry of the Economy and Finance;
- Ministry of Social Welfare;
- Secretariat of State for the Treasury;
- Secretariat of State for Commerce, Industry, Tourism and the Craft Industry;
- Secretariat of State for Public Information and Parliamentary Affairs;
- Secretariat of State for National Freedom Fighters.

14. After many delays caused by several challenges by the junta to individuals proposed by the Head of State to fill the ministerial positions allocated to him under the above distribution, the Government was formed and the Prime Minister was invested at Bissau on 20 February 1999. His investiture nevertheless took place in a festive atmosphere and in a spirit conducive to national reconciliation.

E. Holding of general and presidential elections

15. The Abuja Agreement stipulated that general and presidential elections must be held not later than the end of March 1999. However, the delays in implementing the Agreement made it impossible to hold elections by the dates originally stipulated. The signatories to the Abuja Agreement nevertheless continue to reiterate the need for free and transparent elections to be held in their country as soon as possible. The current Chairman of ECOWAS and myself

will continue consultations with the parties to the conflict to ensure that they reach a consensus on the date of the elections.

III. Political issues

16. In the political sphere, it should be mentioned that President Eyadéma appointed Ambassador Takassi as Special Representative of the current Chairman of ECOWAS in Guinea-Bissau.

17. Recent weeks were marked, in the political sphere, by the investiture of the Prime Minister, the return of political parties to the scene and the consent of the Head of the State to the publication of the report of the parliamentary commission of inquiry into arms trafficking between Guinea-Bissau and Senegal. Regarding the investiture, it should be mentioned that, despite the junta's difficult relations with the Governments of Senegal and Guinea, its High Command welcomed the fact that the two Governments were invited to the ceremony. The Republic of Guinea was represented in Bissau by its Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Republic of Senegal by its Minister of the Interior. Mention should also be made of the meeting between President Vieira and General Mane on the occasion of the visit to Bissau by the European Union Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs. This meeting at the highest level between the parties to the conflict, and the Lomé meeting which followed it on 17 and 18 February 1999, contributed in some small measure to ironing out the differences between President Vieira and General Mane. During a meeting held in Bissau on 9 March 1999 with the Special Representative of the current Chairman of ECOWAS, the representatives of seven political parties expressed their desire to participate in the process of peace-building in Guinea-Bissau, as well as their support for the idea of holding elections in June or July 1999. They also indicated their readiness to participate in and assist with voter registration for the forthcoming elections in their country.

18. I also proposed to the parties to the conflict a draft agreement between ECOWAS and the Republic of Guinea-Bissau on the operations, composition and status of ECOMOG. This draft was discussed, amended and adopted by the Executive Secretariat and by the representatives of President Vieira and of the junta. We signed this agreement on 22 March 1999, on the occasion of a mission which I undertook to Guinea-Bissau. The agreement should provide the necessary protection for the various contingents which make up ECOMOG in Guinea-Bissau and guarantee them the freedoms essential for carrying out their mission. The agreement specifies the mandate, troop strength and missions of ECOMOG and outlines the concept of its operations. It sets a timetable for the withdrawal of Guinean and Senegalese troops and also the duration of ECOMOG operations in Guinea-Bissau. Lastly, it specifies the privileges and immunities granted to ECOMOG.

IV. Military issues

19. The resumption of hostilities on 31 January 1999 occurred after a press campaign highly critical of the President of the Republic, ultimatums to ECOWAS and the publication of statements by certain leaders that were not conciliatory. These unfortunate events, like the withdrawal of Guinean and Senegalese troops, nevertheless helped to make the parties to the conflict more aware of the need

to make meaningful concessions with a view to the peaceful, rapid settlement of the crisis. They undoubtedly contributed to the success of the processes of disarmament, return to barracks, recovery of weapons and other activities undertaken by the joint military commission.

V. Social and humanitarian issues

20. Technical reasons seem to be delaying the reopening of Osvaldo Vieira airport, which was provided for in the Abuja Agreement. The port, on the other hand, is operational.

21. Banks are expected to reopen very soon, and a team from the headquarters of the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) is currently auditing them. Following an official communiqué issued on 20 March 1999 by the Government of National Unity and calling on all civil servants to return to work on 22 March 1999, public offices and schools have reopened.

22. People who fled Bissau on or after 31 January 1999 are beginning to return home and the capital is resuming its day-to-day activities. Many homes in Bissau remain abandoned, however, their owners or occupants still not having returning from exile or internal displacement. Many displaced persons are still living in the makeshift camps which were set up in several locations. The village of Safim, for instance, which normally has a population of 600 currently has 43,935 people living in a displaced persons camp. The town of Cumura has also seen its population increase dramatically.

23. In February 1999, the numbers of people living in displaced persons camps were as follows:

Bissau

• Fatim Parish	3 000
• San Antônio de Bandim Parish	200
• Cristo Redentor Parish	400
• Cathedral	1 000
• Vocational School (CIFAP Alto de Bandim)	7 000
• 3 de agôsto Hospital	10 000
• Health project	15 000
• Mendez Hospital	1 000
• 24 de setembro Stadium	1 000
• Takir	9 000

• Ndame	5 000
• Ministry of Justice	7 000
Safim	
• Displaced persons camp	43 935
Cumura	
Displaced persons camp	30 000

24. A meningitis epidemic is sweeping the country's interior, particularly the displaced persons camps.

25. Despite the success of the joint military commission's efforts in the areas of disarmament, dismantling of the front line and demilitarization, a number of problems remain.

VI. Current or potential problems

26. While disarmament was carried out relatively easily in the capital, Bissau, it has yet to take place in the interior of the country. Junta allegations of loyalist arms caches in Bissau are hampering cooperation between the junta and the joint military commission with regard to disarmament and demilitarization in the interior of Guinea-Bissau. The unsuccessful investigations carried out in response to those allegations unfortunately failed to inspire complete confidence or to allow disarmament and demilitarization to continue in the interior of Guinea-Bissau.

27. The departure of foreign troops from the territory of Guinea-Bissau also led some people to perceive an imbalance of forces on the ground that could be corrected only by a substantial increase in ECOMOG troops, which the President of Guinea-Bissau is urgently demanding.

28. The limited troop strength and scant resources of the ECOMOG force currently operating in Guinea-Bissau are in fact delaying or reducing the effectiveness of some of its activities.

29. It was not possible to hold the general and presidential elections which were to have taken place not later than the end of March 1999, and the parties have yet to agree on new dates.

30. The expiration of the term of office of the President of the Republic in September 1999 could complicate relations between the parties, unless they make the compromises needed to avoid an institutional vacuum.

31. The prior return of refugees and displaced persons should not be an insurmountable obstacle. In any case, it should not be a pretext for lengthy postponement of the elections. In this regard, it is important to stress that most displaced persons camps are situated within a radius less than 20 kilometres from Bissau.

32. The current Chairman of ECOWAS and myself have entered into consultations with the parties to the conflict to find a solution to the thorny issue of the date of the elections. It is hoped that these ongoing consultations will soon be brought to a fruitful conclusion.

33. There are legitimate questions about how the parties to the conflict, politicians and the general public will react to the National Assembly's publication of the report of the parliamentary commission of inquiry into arms trafficking between Guinea-Bissau and Senegal.

34. It is impossible to predict how the radio stations belonging to the parties to the conflict will behave in the run-up to the elections, and it will not be easy to impose a code of conduct on their presenters.

35. In view of the foregoing, the international community should take rapid, forceful action to support ECOWAS efforts to achieve a lasting peace in Guinea-Bissau.

VII. Observations

36. Despite the very significant progress achieved in the disarmament process through the cooperation of the parties and the professionalism of ECOMOG troops, the situation on the ground remains precarious.

37. As the date of the elections draws nearer, the risks of tension developing between loyalists, the junta and political parties will increase.

38. Despite all that ECOMOG has done since its deployment in Guinea-Bissau, it still has many important tasks to accomplish in that country.

39. In the circumstances, priority must clearly be given to strengthening the ECOMOG force by rapidly deploying an additional battalion of 850 men in Guinea-Bissau. Any assistance which can be given to ECOWAS to effect this deployment will be greatly appreciated.

40. It would be particularly useful to acquire for ECOMOG appropriate logistics for the deployment of a naval unit, made necessary by Guinea-Bissau's geographical make-up. The acquisition of an aeroplane or a helicopter is also essential to enable ECOMOG to make important, urgent trips between Bissau and points outside the country.

41. Appropriate friendly pressure should be brought to bear by all those with any influence on the parties to the conflict, to persuade them to show constant willingness to resolve the crisis peacefully, avoid any institutional vacuum and refrain from recruiting and training new combatants and hiding weapons.

42. Since the Casamance problem was at the heart of the crisis, any efforts that may be made to resolve it will undoubtedly contribute to the restoration of a definitive, lasting peace in Guinea-Bissau. Such efforts will therefore be particularly appreciated by ECOWAS.

43. The initiatives and actions taken by the Senegalese Government and the Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de la Casamance (MDFC) to achieve a definitive settlement of the crisis should be encouraged.

44. One of Guinea-Bissau's most urgent needs appears to be assistance in building the Government's capacity to create an economic and social environment conducive to sustainable development.

45. One major source of concern is the large number of anti-personnel mines and unexploded devices buried in Guinea-Bissau's soil, the destruction of which requires appropriate assistance.

46. The presence and effective action in Guinea-Bissau of United Nations humanitarian agencies will be a great help to the country. Adequate assistance, promptly provided, would do much to alleviate the suffering of displaced persons and refugees.

47. Economic and international operators need to be informed that the port of Bissau has reopened and that it offers full safety guarantees for fishing and for the import of goods.

48. Rapid solutions must be found to enable the necessary aeronautical equipment to be purchased for Guinea-Bissau to permit the reopening of Osvaldo Vieira airport.

49. The international community is invited to begin mobilizing the necessary material and financial resources and to provide the necessary technical assistance for the holding of free, transparent elections in Guinea-Bissau.

50. The international community is also invited to help the Government of Guinea-Bissau with the reconstitution of the armed forces and security forces, as soon as the country begins this process, and to contribute to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Guinea-Bissau.

51. I wish to express my appreciation to the Special Representative of the current Chairman of ECOWAS, Ambassador Takassi, and to the Commander of ECOMOG Operations in Guinea-Bissau, Colonel Gnakoudé Berena, and his men for the excellent work which they have done as part of the implementation of the Abuja Agreement of 1 November 1998.

(Signed) Lansana KOUYATE
Executive Secretary